

OBSERVATIONS by JOSEPH LUND

As requested in last week's Observation a reader has come forward with the exact connection between Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Duxbury. My statement that Miss Carson had actually experienced a spraying of DDT for mosquitoes at the home of Marion Huckins on Powder Point was a bit off the mark. But the fact that such a spraying inspired her to write a book "which changed the world," was perfectly correct. Let's "tell it like it was."

The following is quoted from the book *Sea and Earth: The Life of Rachel Carson* by Philip Sterling, published by Thomas Y. Crowell Co., New York in 1970 and now available in a paperback printed by Dell Publishing Co.

"Nevertheless she (Rachel Carson) welcomed an invitation from Harper & Bros. to do a book for their World Perspectives series. She felt she had written herself out of the ocean (*The Sea Around Us* and others). Now she intended to write about the continents as she had about the seas, a book that might be called *Remembrances of Earth*. She never got around to it.

"A letter Rachel received in January 1958 changed her plans. It came from Olga Owens Huckins, wife of Stuart Huckins and sister-in-law of Marion

Huckins, who was book editor of the *Boston Post*, a resident of Duxbury, Mass. and Rachel's friend of 6 years standing.

"The mosquito control plane flew over our small town last summer. Since we live close to the marshes we were treated to several lethal doses, as the pilot criss-crossed over our place. We consider the spraying of active poison over private land to be a serious aerial intrusion.

"The 'harmless' shower bath killed 7 of our lovely song birds outright. We picked up 3 dead bodies the next morning, right by the door ... the next day 3 were scattered around the bird bath. I had emptied it after the spraying but **YOU CAN NEVER KILL DDT**. On the following day one robin dropped suddenly from a branch in our woods.

"We were too heartsick to hunt for other corpses. All of these birds died horribly, and in the same way. Their bills were gaping open and their splayed claws were drawn up to their breasts in agony.

"Air spraying where it is not needed or wanted is inhuman, undemocratic, and probably unconstitutional. For those of us who stand helplessly on the tortured earth, it is intolerable.

"Reading the letter, Rachel decided to postpone her book about the earth's billions-of-years old past. Her readers needed, much more urgently, to think about its future."

The controversy stirred up, and her tremendous energy in fighting for what has proved to be so right, is so similar to current violent debates on use or non-use of nuclear energy. The last word on that one is not yet in. For the above I am indebted to Charlie Wood, for many years the Huckins' neighbor on Powder Point. My apologies to the late Olga, and to my readers for my original factual errors.

Mrs. John Cutler, our esteemed editor and publisher, saw a pair of bluebirds opposite the *Clipper* office last week. May be they heeded our call of "Bluebirds, come back," written last summer.

On Friday, April 15, your observer had 2 splendid sightings of a pair of Upland Plovers at the Bay Farm Field. This bird of fields and open hillsides, though

formerly abundant here is extremely rare now due to over-hunting in the past. Two years ago I saw one at Bay Farm in July, acting as if it were protecting a brood of young. I couldn't find the wee ones in the long grass. Trevor Lloyd-Evans of MBO vows he will prove that they breed in the area, along with our plentiful bobolinks and meadow-larks.

The early migrants are beginning to show up in the woods. I have seen a Veery and a pine warbler. From now on we will be treated to daily arrivals to look at and listen to. Easter is past, town meetings are finally over. Election results are in, so there's nothing to do except go out and see the blooms expand from day to day, see the birds, fish or golf as you wish, as only once a year does spring come bustin' out all

over. Enjoy it while we can.

Perhaps the most important job we all have for the next 5 months is to get our legs ready to walk and our bodies conditioned for a life where fuel for locomotion and heating may be prohibitively expensive or just not available.

Isn't that a dreadful way to end our observations on such a beautiful spring day?

